

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE 1-APHILADELPHIA INQUIRER  
15 December 1986

# Nicaragua claims spy is captured

## Believed to be brother of U.S. congressman

By Andrew Maykuth  
Inquirer Staff Writer

MANAGUA, Nicaragua — A man believed to be the brother of a U.S. congressman was captured in an amateurish effort to spy on a Sandinista military installation, Nicaraguan officials said yesterday. U.S. officials said they were seeking permission to see the man.

The American, identified on a U.S. passport as Sam Nesley Hall, 49, of Dayton, Ohio, was arrested inside a restricted zone at the Sandinista air force base at Punta Huete. Nicaragua's foreign minister called him "a spy possibly gathering information for air attacks on Nicaragua" and said "plans and sketches" were found in one of the American's socks.

Officials said that Hall first told them he was a journalist "curious about Nicaragua," but later said he worked for the Phoenix Battalion, "a private group that gathers military information that is of interest to the United States government."

According to reports, Hall is the brother of Rep. Tony P. Hall (D., Ohio).

The congressman issued a press release yesterday saying, "I am surprised and concerned over press reports about my brother Sam. I have received no confirmation from the State Department. I hope to discuss this soon with State Department officials before taking any action."

"I do not share the same views on U.S. policy on Central America as my brother does, but I love him and pray for his safety."

Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto said Hall initially identified himself as a journalist after being apprehended Friday. He said military officials found a map, crudely drawn on hotel stationery, tucked in Hall's socks.

"It's not customary for writers to carry notes inside their socks," D'Escoto said. "We don't know if he's a quack. We don't know if he's some

kind of a nut. We don't know exactly what he is, but the whole thing is kind of worthy of consideration and further exploration."

Hall, who officials said had taken a cab from Managua to the air base about 35 miles northeast of the capital, was arrested Friday, a day after a Nicaraguan appeals court upheld a 30-year prison sentence for Eugene Hasenfus, the ex-Marine from Wisconsin captured Oct. 6 after the Sandinistas shot down a plane in which

he was helping deliver weapons to anti-Sandinista rebels.

A spokesman for the U.S. Embassy said it knew nothing about Hall. "We have asked for access to him, and we haven't heard anything at all from the government," said the spokesman, Alfred Laun.

D'Escoto said Hall's arrest "helps to confirm information that we've gathered from many sources about a plan — a United States plan — to attack Nicaragua around this time. The type of information that was being gathered by this man about strategic points — points of military interest like bridges and airstrips — only helps to confirm the seriousness of that information."

Hall's passport included entry visas from such countries as Israel, South Africa and El Salvador, D'Escoto said. Hall also said he worked with Nicaraguan Miskito Indian rebels in Honduras, D'Escoto said.

Hall was being held and interrogated at an undisclosed location, D'Escoto said.

Officials at the Hotel Intercontinental in Managua said Hall registered at the hotel under his own name on Thursday. Since his arrest, the government has cleared his possessions from the room.

Several discrepancies arose in the Nicaraguans' account of Hall's arrest. A communique issued by the Foreign Ministry said Hall entered Nicaragua on Wednesday on a Tan-Sahsa Airlines flight from Tegucigalpa, Honduras, but the airline does not have a flight to Managua on Wednesdays.

Hall's passport, a photocopy of which D'Escoto presented at the news conference, has an expiration date of Jan. 31, 1987. Nicaraguans strictly prohibit any foreigners from entering the country with less than six months on their passports.

Punta Huete, where Hall was said to have been captured, is the Sandinista air force's largest base. When it was under construction in 1983, Reagan administration officials protested that its mile-long concrete runway was designed to accommo-

date advanced jet fighters or bombers.

Nicaragua's two newspapers, both aligned with the leftist government, yesterday trumpeted the arrest of Hall with banner headlines. "Another Yankee," blared *Barricada*. "North American Spy Captured," proclaimed *El Nuevo Diario*.

Hall's arrest came as speculation increased that the Sandinista government might pardon Hasenfus before Christmas. President Daniel Ortega and other Nicaraguan officials have hinted that they think Hasenfus should be released, and Sen. Christopher J. Dodd (D., Conn.) is scheduled to arrive in Managua today for meetings with Sandinista officials that may include discussions about Hasenfus' release.

Laun, the U.S. Embassy spokesman, said American officials only knew what they had read about Hall **STAT** Nicaraguan newspapers. He declined to comment on whether Hall previously had been in contact with the embassy.